

## Fact Sheet

# Justice for MARISSA ALEXANDER



### Case websites

[www.justice4marissa.com](http://www.justice4marissa.com)  
[www.facebook.com/Free Marissa Now](https://www.facebook.com/FreeMarissaNow)  
[www.facebook.com/PacificNorthwest Alliance  
toFree Marissa Alexander](https://www.facebook.com/PacificNorthwestAllianceToFreeMarissaAlexander)

### Donate

[www.justice4marissa.com](http://www.justice4marissa.com)

### Write to Marissa Alexander

Marissa Alexander #J46944  
Lowell Annex, 11120 NW Gainesville, Rd.  
Ocala, FL 34482

### Supporters

African-American/Black Women's Cultural Alliance  
Black Women's Blueprint  
Corrine Brown, U.S. Representative from Florida  
Dream Defenders  
Families Against Mandatory Minimums  
Florida New Majority  
Green Party of Seattle  
Idle No More, Minneapolis/St. Paul  
INCITE!  
Justice Works  
The Kandake Dance Theatre for Social Change  
Khametica Aspired  
LEMS Bookstore, Seattle  
Martin Luther King III  
NAACP - Jacksonville, Florida and national chapters  
National Congress of Black Women  
New Jim Crow Movement  
Organized Workers for Labor Solidarity (OWLS)  
Suzanne Pharr  
Radical Women  
Beth E. Richie  
Seattle Women In Black  
Sisters Organize for Survival  
Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)  
Southern Freedom Movement

**Stop the legal lynching by Florida's mandatory minimum sentencing laws of an African American domestic violence survivor.**

### Who is Marissa Alexander?

Marissa Alexander, an African American mother from Jacksonville, Florida, was sentenced to 20 years in prison on May 11, 2012 for firing a warning shot to halt an attack by her abusive husband, Rico Gray. Alexander had no prior arrests, was licensed to carry a gun, and had a restraining order against her husband. No one was injured by her action. She was denied a self-defense plea under Florida's "Stand Your Ground" law. Her outrageous sentence is a result of Florida's mandatory minimum sentencing law and of racist/sexist stereotypes that paint African American women as aggressors and deny sympathy to women who stand up to their abusers.

At the time of the incident in August 2010, Marissa Alexander was 31 years old, employed at a software firm, with two 9-year-old twins and a nine-day-old daughter. She had been abused for several years by her husband, with injuries that put her in the hospital. Alexander had moved out of the house she shared with Gray, but returned to retrieve some belongings, believing Gray was not present.

Unfortunately, Gray was home with his two young sons. He attacked Alexander, choked her and threw her against the wall. Alexander tried to get away, but was trapped in the garage. She retrieved a gun for protection. Gray said he was going to kill her and charged at her. She fired one shot in an upward direction. Though no one was hurt, Alexander was charged with three counts of aggravated assault, with an enhanced sentence because a gun was involved. The case is under appeal. Alexander is currently in Florida State Prison.

## Information

"You call this justice? Not if it's the victim who goes to prison"

[www.miamiherald.com/2012/05/28/2821403/you-call-this-justice-not-if-its.html](http://www.miamiherald.com/2012/05/28/2821403/you-call-this-justice-not-if-its.html)

"Martin Luther King III to hold March in Florida in protest of Marissa Alexander sentence"

[www.thegrio.com/2012/07/11/martin-luther-king-iii-to-hold-march-in-florida-in-protest-of-marisa-alexander-sentence](http://www.thegrio.com/2012/07/11/martin-luther-king-iii-to-hold-march-in-florida-in-protest-of-marisa-alexander-sentence)

"Radical Women denounces race and sex bias in Marissa Alexander case"

[www.radicalwomen.org/MarissaAlexander.shtml](http://www.radicalwomen.org/MarissaAlexander.shtml)

"Fighting for Our Lives, Marissa Alexander & Stand Your Ground," Blog Radio by Black Women's Blueprint

[www.blogtalkradio.com/blackwomensblueprint/2012/05/10/fighting-for-our-lives-marissa-alexander-stand-your-ground](http://www.blogtalkradio.com/blackwomensblueprint/2012/05/10/fighting-for-our-lives-marissa-alexander-stand-your-ground)



## How have the laws been used unfairly in this case?

Rico Gray initially admitted in a sworn statement, "The way I was with women...they never knew what I was thinking or what I might do. Hit them, push them. ...I honestly think [Marissa] just didn't want me to put my hands on her anymore, so she did what she feel like she have to do to make sure she wouldn't get hurt, you know. ...The gun was never actually pointed at me."

Despite this, a judge denied Alexander's plea that she was "standing her ground" under a Florida law that supposedly protects people acting in self-defense. This law was infamously used to shield the killer of Black teenager Trayvon Martin until a national movement forced an arrest. As long as the law is on the books, it should not be used in a discriminatory fashion.

Mandatory minimum sentences are unconstitutional in the federal courts. But Florida's harsh "10-20-Life" law requires that people who commit a crime in which a gun is fired are given a mandatory 20 year sentence. The laws have been massively used against Black youth. Judges have no sentencing discretion based on the specifics of the case. Instead, prosecutors have all the power in determining the charges and the associated sentences.

Other people in Florida have also been wrongly sentenced and the system is beginning to be challenged. Recently, a 65-year-old man serving 20 years in a case very similar to Marissa Alexander's had his sentence reversed. This must also happen in the Alexander case.

## What can people can do to free Marissa Alexander?

Organize local actions in defense of Marissa Alexander and all victims of domestic violence.

Call on civil rights organizations, feminists, anti-domestic violence advocates, churches, and prisoner rights groups to add their support.

Oppose mandatory minimum sentencing laws. Donate to Alexander's legal costs.

Publicize the case to the press and on social media. Sign petitions and write letters to public officials and newspapers demanding the immediate release of Marissa Alexander and an end to mandatory minimums.

Visit [tinyurl.com/freemarissatakeaction](http://tinyurl.com/freemarissatakeaction) for more ideas!

**To get involved, contact [FreeMarissaNow@gmail.com](mailto:FreeMarissaNow@gmail.com). Visit [facebook.com/FreeMarissaNow](http://facebook.com/FreeMarissaNow) and [freemarissanow.tumblr.com](http://freemarissanow.tumblr.com)**

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